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Letter dated 31 July 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

Further to my latest report to the Security Council concerning the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) (S/2013/381), I hereby request the Council to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), which is due to expire on 31 August 2013. In a letter dated 12 July 2013 addressed to me, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon requested that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of one year, without amendment.

UNIFIL continues to play a crucial role in ensuring peace and stability in southern Lebanon, as well as full respect for the Blue Line by both Lebanon and Israel. In accordance with its mandate, UNIFIL continues to monitor the cessation of hostilities and to assist the Lebanese Armed Forces in taking steps towards the establishment, between the Blue Line and the Litani River, of an area free of any unauthorized armed personnel, assets and weapons. UNIFIL remains engaged with the parties on the outstanding issue of northern Ghajar and continues to focus on all violations of resolution 1701 (2006), including ground and air violations. UNIFIL also takes all necessary action within its capabilities to ensure that its area of operations is not utilized for hostile activities of any kind. The UNIFIL Maritime Task Force continues to carry out its dual mandate of conducting maritime interdiction operations in the area of maritime operations and training Lebanese navy personnel.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure a comprehensive approach to the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) that integrates the endeavours of UNIFIL, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the United Nations country team; to further involve the Government of Lebanon in the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006); and to further the strategic dialogue with, and increase the capacity of, the Lebanese Armed Forces. The latter is intended to facilitate the gradual assumption by the Lebanese Armed Forces of effective and sustainable security control of the UNIFIL area of operations and Lebanese territorial waters, as a key element in supporting moves towards a permanent ceasefire.

In a recent statement (S/PRST/2013/9), the President of the Security Council, speaking on behalf of the Council, highlighted the impact of the Syrian crisis on the stability and security of Lebanon and stressed the crucial role played by the Lebanese Armed Forces in responding to new security challenges, characterizing them as a central pillar of the country's stability. I underline the Council's call for increased international support for the Lebanese Armed Forces, in response to the

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latter's recently-launched capabilities development plan as well as in the context of the strategic dialogue between the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL.

Cooperation between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces on land and at sea continues to be essential for the implementation of the mandate of UNIFIL. Despite the temporary redeployment of some units of the Lebanese Armed Forces from the South Litani Sector to elsewhere in the country, a substantial number of coordinated operational activities between UNIFIL and the Lebanese Armed Forces continue to be conducted. UNIFIL has addressed the decreased physical presence of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations by increasing its operational activities. The current strength of the Lebanese Armed Forces in the UNIFIL area of operations stands at approximately two brigades.

The liaison and coordination arrangements of UNIFIL with the parties, including the tripartite mechanism, have facilitated a number of constructive and pragmatic measures. UNIFIL continues to build on its efforts to promote practical arrangements on the ground and understanding between the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Israel Defense Forces in order to further stabilize the situation along the Blue Line, to remove pretexts and possible points of friction and to prevent future incidents and build trust.

The process of visibly marking the Blue Line is proceeding with the marking of non-contentious points. The parties are continuing to give their full support to Blue Line marking as an essential confidence-building measure.

UNIFIL has continued to ensure that the tripartite mechanism is as flexible as possible and enables the parties to discuss a wider range of issues. In this regard, the parties have agreed to discuss maritime security issues through the tripartite mechanism.

There has been no progress in the establishment of a UNIFIL office in Tel Aviv.

The overall attitude of the local population towards UNIFIL remains positive. This notwithstanding, incidents of unfriendly behaviour towards UNIFIL patrols and personnel and freedom of movement restrictions occasionally occur. UNIFIL will continue to work closely with the Lebanese authorities, with the aim of minimizing the occurrence of such incidents.

The freedom of movement of UNIFIL and the security and safety of its personnel are integral to the effective execution of its tasks. Primary responsibility for ensuring the freedom of movement of UNIFIL personnel in the area of operations lies with the Lebanese authorities.

The total number of military personnel, as at 15 July 2013, stands at 10,640. The UNIFIL civilian component numbers 346 international and 658 national staff.

I am grateful to the 37 troop-contributing countries that make up UNIFIL for their ongoing commitment. This commitment, coupled with the development of a strategic partnership with the Lebanese Armed Forces, has made possible the successful implementation of several key aspects of resolution 1701 (2006). However, as the UNIFIL mandate approaches its expiration date, it is clear that more work needs to be done.

I would also like to express my appreciation to the UNIFIL Force Commander and Head of Mission, Major General Paolo Serra, and to all the military and civilian personnel of UNIFIL, for the work that they are doing in southern Lebanon in the service of peace.

Regarding the financial aspects of UNIFIL, by its resolution 67/279, the General Assembly appropriated to the Special Account for UNIFIL the amount of $492.6 million gross for the maintenance of the Force for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014. Should the Council decide to extend the mandate of UNIFIL beyond 31 August 2013, the cost of maintaining the Force will be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly.

As at 30 June 2013, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIFIL amounted to $35.6 million. Total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at the same date amounted to $1,246.7 million. As at 22 July 2013, amounts owed to the Member States that contribute the troops that make up UNIFIL totalled $12.7 million. Reimbursements of troop and contingent-owned equipment costs have been made for the periods up to 31 May 2013 and 31 March 2013, respectively, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

I am pleased to report that on 1 July 2013, UNIFIL successfully launched the pilot deployment of the Umoja solution. By piloting the implementation of this globally integrated system, UNIFIL has significantly contributed to my five-year action agenda to share financial, human and physical resources, knowledge and information technology more effectively throughout the Secretariat, thereby allowing for high-quality and cost-effective service delivery in support of mandate accomplishment.

With the above information in mind, I recommend that the Council extend the mandate of UNIFIL for a further period of 12 months, until 31 August 2014.

I should be grateful if you would bring this letter to the attention of the members of the Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon